



CONSCIENTIOUS CARE

Maintain and Retrain the Brain

At some point we have all misplaced our keys and forgotten someone's name. Before you get too worried and think you are losing your mind, know that most of us will experience minor memory impairments and slower cognitive processing ability as we age. According to Mary Doepke, Owner of Home Helpers in Western Springs, "The changes people experience as part of the normal aging process tend to be more annoying than anything." It is when there is disease or injury to the brain that our everyday functioning is compromised.

Our mind is the control center of our central nervous system. The human brain directs our cognitive function and motor abilities. The process of acquiring, processing, remembering and using information involves attention, memory and intelligence.

Attention includes interest, concentration and consciousness. If we are not interested in something, it is unlikely that we will focus. Distractions and sensory overload also make it difficult for us to concentrate or pay attention. In addition, illness, medication, alcohol and drugs can compromise our consciousness or attentiveness. Simply put, anything that affects our attention also impacts our ability to retain and recall information.

Memory refers to how we store, retain and recall things. As part of the normal aging process, we notice some change to our short-term memory. For example, we may not recall what we had for dinner last night. Factors that affect our memory include importance, motivation, expectations, learning habits and more. If we forget what we had for dinner, does it really matter? We tend to recall information that is important to us, it may just take a little longer.

Intelligence has to do with our ability to learn, capacity to reason, think abstractly, and more. As we age, the knowledge we acquire over time remains. The challenges we experience are adapting to unfamiliar situations that involve planning and problem solving.

While you may have heard suggestions like eating chocolate or drinking a glass of red wine, there are practical things we can do to help maintain and retrain our brain. An article in the May 9, 2007 edition of Forbes Magazine (www.Forbes.com) offers the following suggestions:

- Lifelong learning –stimulate your mind by learning new things, the more complex the better.
- Computer programs –software programs can help to challenge, stimulate and train your brain (e.g. www.SharpBrains.com).
- Social interaction –socializing is a form of mental exercise, engage in conversations that challenge your brain.
- Stress reduction –stress puts an unnecessary burden on your brain and keeps you from effectively focusing on things that matter.
- Physical exercise –exercise leads to increased blood flow to your brain which has been shown to help improve cognitive performance.

Doepke adds, at Home Helpers we recognize the value of helping our client engage in day-to-day life. Our caregivers provide companionship and support to help people maintain their independence and reach for their dreams.

PERSPECTIVE

INDEPENDENCE – It's truly priceless

Ever notice how it can take sickness for people to truly appreciate good health? The same can be true for our independence. Often it is the times we become more dependent on others for the essentials of daily living that we recognize and truly appreciate our own independence. See if you can relate to any of the following situations:

- a person with a broken leg or arm may find it difficult to bathe or dress
- a pregnant mother on bed rest becomes dependent on family and friends for help with everyday activities
- a person undergoing surgery relies on family and friends for transportation home from the hospital and help during the recovery period.

For each of these scenarios, one's independence may be compromised for hours, days or weeks. However, for the person who finds him or herself relying on others, it may seem like months or years.

It is estimated that half of all Americans live with a chronic health condition. For many conditions such as diabetes, people are able to lead a normal life by modifying their lifestyle and managing their medication. However, for other chronic conditions, such as multiple sclerosis and dementia, people can be dependent on others for daily living activities. Regardless of whether someone can benefit from occasional assistance or on-going care and support, Home Helpers is committed to providing the care individuals and their families need and deserve.

Did you know that over 44 million people serve as adult (family) caregivers? Many families find it necessary to supplement the informal care they provide, with formal care provided by professional caregivers such as Home Helpers. According to the National Alliance for Caregiving, the people for whom caregivers provide assistance are as follows:

- Grandparent (38%)
- Parent or step-parent (34%)
- Sibling/step (11%)
- Aunt/uncle/other relative (9%)
- Other non-relative (8%)

Mary Doepke, Owner of Home Helpers says "I find it odd that caring for a spouse is not counted as caregiving in the responses above." Caregiving activities often focus on what are referred to as Activities of Daily Living (ADLs.) ADLs have to do with both personal care and the ability for someone to live independently. Doepke adds, "while many of our clients are able to handle their own personal care, much of our focus is on activities associated with independent living. The services we provide often include helping around the house, assisting with shopping, preparing meals, and driving people to appointments. We also serve as a companion so a person is able to enjoy the comfort of his or her home and not be alone all day.

Many of our clients have come to recognize their own limitations and realize their independence is priceless. The more we can do to provide the care and support people need and deserve, the better able our clients are to maintain and maximize their independence and live life to the fullest. Making Life Easier™ is more than a tagline for Home Helpers, it's our mission.

COMMUNITY CALENDAR



The following is a listing of local events that might be of particular interest to Baby Boomers and Older Adults.

ETHNOGERIATRICS

Everyone is influenced by our individual culture, ethnicity, history, values, and beliefs. These variables influence every aspect of our lives, including our health and wellness practices. This rich tapestry of diversity is evident in history, adds brilliance to art and literature, and is apparent in the people within our community.

The interrelationships among aspects of diversity have a major impact on how we age and on our support system. According to census data, we can expect a significant shift in America's population over the coming years.

U.S. population:	2000	2050
▪ White Americans	83.5%	64.2%
▪ Hispanic/Latino	5.6%	16.4%
▪ African-American	8.1%	12.2%
▪ Asian/Pacific Islander	2.4%	6.5%



A “one size fits all” approach to health and health care is not an option. Recognizing how culture and ethnicity influence aging and the care process, the American Geriatrics Society (AGS) coined the term *ethnogeriatrics*. As defined by AGS, this component of geriatrics considers the “influence of ethnicity and culture on the health and well-being of older adults.”

CONTACT INFORMATION



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HOME HELPERS – *Making Life Easier*[™]

Home Helpers' offers personalized care services similar to the care and support that is often provided by family members. We tailor our services and schedules to address our clients' needs.

Home Helpers begins with a consultation, preferably at the care recipient's residence. This gives us the opportunity...

- To meet the client and assess the situation.
- To make sure the requested services can be properly and safely performed.
- To ensure the caregiver(s) assigned possesses the personality, skill set and passion that best meet your loved one's needs.

Home Helpers' experienced and compassionate caregivers are bonded, insured and thoroughly screened. Our caregivers are employees, not subcontractors, thereby minimizing client liability.
